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MONTHLY REPORT

ON

THE PROGRESS OF THERAPEUTICS.

Edited for the Edinburgh Medical Journal.

No. XV.—December 1875.

BY

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Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh; Lecturer on Medical Chemistry in the Ledwich School of Medicine, Dublin; Corresponding Member of the Therapeutical Society of Paris; Hon. Member of the Ontario and Chicago Colleges of Pharmacy, etc.; Librarian to the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

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REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THERAPEUTICS.

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From the Edinburgh Medical Journal for December 1875.

AILANTHUS GLANDULOSA.—According to Dr Cobert, the root of the ailanthus glandulosa is superior to ipecacuanha or any other drug in the treatment of dysentery. It is very bitter, and in large doses induces vomiting. The Chinese take a cup of the strong infusion twice daily.—*New Remedies*, July.

ACTION OF ALKALIES AND THEIR SALTS.—Pupier arrives at the following conclusions:—The administration of the alkalies in a state of health tends to augment the red corpuscles, to increase temperature and weight, and to favour trophic phenomena. In a diseased condition of the tissues, the alkalies produce anæmia by aiding in morbid changes; in a word, they may be said to increase physiological function, while they stimulate pathological processes. —*Comptes Rendus*, May. Dr Waggoner substitutes the alkaline carbonates and bicarbonates for the iodides in the treatment of glandular enlargements and indolent ulcers. He accredits the alkali and not the iodine with the curative power.—*Trans. Med. Soc. State of Pensylvania.* Dr O. Funke (*Pfluger's Archiv*, ix. 416, and *Centralblatt*, No. 29, 1875) contends that ammonia stimulates the peripheral motor nervous elements. He concludes from his experiments that it excites the vagus more quickly but less powerfully than the vaso-motor centre. In a paper, in the *Archiv für Experimentelle Pathol. und Pharmak.*, is a record of the views held by Lange respecting the action of ammonia. He always failed to detect the elimination of ammonia in a gaseous state by the lungs.

He found that when carbonate of ammonia is added to blood, it will require twice as high a temperature to extricate the ammonia when the blood was taken from a living animal as when the blood was taken from a dead body. Lange believes that the ammonia salts differ from each other physiologically only in intensity; he regards the chloride as the most poisonous. That the nervous system is powerfully influenced by this salt is evidenced by the violent convulsions which it is capable of inducing; the respiration, blood-pressure, and frequency of the pulse are also powerfully affected by it.

Effects of Lime and Magnesia on the Alkalinity of the Urine.—M. Caulet, in a communication to the *Bull. Gén. de Thérapeutique*, 30th April, gives the results of his investigations in this subject. He finds that lime and magnesia render the urine alkaline not directly, but by increasing the alkalinity of the blood, which they do by necessitating an increased secretion of acid juices in the stomach. Contrasting the clinical differences between the carbonates of the alkaline earths and those of the alkalies, he affirms that the former are less certain and less constant in their action on the urine than the latter, and that the alkalinity caused by the former comes on more slowly and lasts longer; that the latter exercise an alterative effect, and that they are preferable in the treatment of gravel, calculus, and other affections incidental to the uric-acid diathesis.

Sulphites and Hyposulphites.—Dr De Pietra Santa published in the *Mouvement Médical*, p. 91, a chapter on "Medication by Sulphites." He states that sulphurous acid is one of the most powerful antifermentative agents, and that it acts on the fermentative principle, not by decomposing it like most antiseptics, but by modifying its molecular aggregation. The sulphites of the alkalies and of the alkaline earths exert even a more constant and penetrating action, and are well tolerated by the organism. They ultimately become converted into sulphates by the oxidizing action of the respiration. To retard this conversion of the sulphites into sulphates, hyposulphites should be substituted for the former; and the hyposulphites have the additional advantage of presenting to the blood very active sulphurous acid in a *nascent* state. Seventy experiments were performed on animals, to demonstrate the possibility of neutralizing a morbid ferment. These experiments were perfectly successful. With regard to the relative advantages of the alkaline salts, the sulphites of potassium and ammonium have a disagreeable flavour, and change very easily; they should hence be reserved for the external treatment of certain malignant sores. The sulphite of soda is efflorescent, has a strong odour of sulphurous acid, and is also best adapted for external application. The sulphite of magnesia is available for internal administration, and the hyposulphite of soda is especially so, on account of its

solubility, and as its flavour is not very objectionable. Zalloni and Panaschera of Lyra were the first to employ sulphite of soda in the commencement of tuberculosis; and Sestini and Ferrini of Turin have given the hyposulphite of lime with great success in cases of tuberculosis in the third stage with the nocturnal fever and fœtid expectoration. The hyposulphite of lime not only opposes the effects of purulent absorption, but favours the transformation of tuberculosis into cretaceous matter.

Arsenic.—MM. Mayençon and Bergeret propose, as a mode of detecting arsenic and antimony, converting them into their hydrogen compounds, and allowing those to come into contact with paper dipped in solution of corrosive sublimate. Arseniuretted hydrogen causes a citron-yellow stain, and antimoniuretted hydrogen gives a grayish-brown stain. These authors find that arsenic is rapidly absorbed in the system, and appears almost immediately in the urine. Sulphurous waters aid in the complete expulsion of arsenic from the system. Antimony is absorbed and diffused more slowly, and its elimination generally begins after it has been given several days. Arsenic and antimony are eliminated by the liver and kidneys, but chiefly by the former, as ascertained by experiments on animals.—*La France Médicale,* Nos. 88 and 89.

Arsenic in Chorea.—In the *British Medical Journal*, 1st May, Dr Eustace Smith insists on the necessity of giving the drug in full doses in this affection, and he calls attention to the tolerance of children for arsenic. To a child between five or six and twelve years, he would give ten minims of Fowler's solution, three times daily immediately after meals.

Arsenic in Diabetes.—In the *Wien. Med. Presse,* Nos. 13 and 14, Dr Samuel V. Pap records the results of his experience of the treatment of diabetes with arsenic. He finds that it decidedly diminishes the secretion of sugar, and in some instances it causes the sugar to disappear entirely from the urine. Arsenic is contraindicated in the more advanced stages of this disease. Von Pap gives three drops of Fowler's solution in the twenty-four hours at first, and gradually increases the dose to twenty drops *per diem.*

Arsenic in Lymphosarcoma.—In a paper by Dr Tholen, in the *Archives für Klinische Chirurgie,* vol. xvii., he records four cases of lymphosarcoma successfully treated by arsenic in the manner adopted by Billroth. On an average, from three to five drops of Fowler's solution were given daily, and about twelve injections of ten drops at a time were made into the tumour during the month.

Arsenic in Pemphigus.—Mr Jonathan Hutchinson has brought forward a mass of evidence which proves conclusively the value of

arsenic in this disease. He asserts his belief that arsenic is an absolute specific for that state of health on which relapsing pemphigus depends. He believes that those who hold an opposite view, notably Professor Hebra, Bazin, and Dr Dyce Duckworth, have not had sufficient regard to the important matter of dosage, nor have they persisted sufficiently long in the treatment.—*Medical Times and Gazette,* 23d Oct. and 6th Nov.

Arsenic-eating.—At a recent meeting of German *savants,* at Gratz, Dr Knapp brought forward abundant proof of the fact that, in upper and middle Styria, the habit of arsenic-eating is very prevalent. The reasons assigned by those who indulge in this vice for doing so are, that it prevents disease, improves the personal appearance, and relieves the breathing.—*Wien. Med. Zeitung,* 28th Sept.

Asarum Canadense.—This drug is recommended by Dr J. Scaffert as a remedy for ascarides. A compound syrup is made by exhausting one ounce of the root with three ounces of alcohol, and six of water, in a percolator; to the product are added a pound of sugar, ten grains of cochineal, twenty grains of carbonate of potash, and half-an-ounce of wine of ipecacuanha. An oleoresin is prepared by exhausting asarum with sulphuric ether, and evaporating spontaneously. Scaffert administers a mixture of equal parts of the compound syrup and fluid extract of senna; of this he gives a tablespoonful thrice daily, and he also gives at bedtime a suppository of one or two drops of the oleoresin made up with cacao-butter. In three or four days a cure is usually effected.—*Phil. Med. Times.*

Carbolic Acid in Whooping-cough.—In the *British Medical Journal,* 2d Oct., Dr Robert Lee again refers to the value of inhalations of carbolic acid in this affection; and in the same journal, Dr George P. Rugg claims priority over both Dr Lee and Dr Burchardt of Berlin, in suggesting the employment of vapour of carbolic acid in whooping-cough. The latter writer recommends the steam of a solution of one and a half or two parts of the acid in 100 parts of water for inhalation thrice daily.

Carbolic Acid in Suppurative Pneumonia.—In a case of suppurative pneumonia following a stab, Dr Angelo Cianciosi injected the pleura with a solution of 50 centigrammes of the acid in 200 of infusion of cinchona. In a month there was marked improvement; the fever ceased, the expectoration diminished, and less pus escaped. Essential oil of turpentine was given internally and by inhalation.—*Independente,* No. 4, 1875.

Carbolic Acid in Skin Disease.—Berndgen (*Allgem. Med.*

Centralzeitung, No. 20) uses in chronic eczema a solution of five parts of the acid in ten of diluted spirit, and 120 of water. This solution he applies every morning with a camel's-hair brush. In acute eczema it is injurious. He has obtained good results with the above solution in the treatment of psoriasis.

Carbolic Acid in Malignant Pustule.—Dr Estradère treats malignant pustule very successfully by the administration of carbolic acid internally and externally.—*Bull. Gen. de Thérapeutique*, 15th June.

Carbolic Acid as an Anthelmintic.—In a case of tænia, the administration of two grains every hour caused expulsion of the head and body of the worm on the second day. Carbolic acid has been recommended by Decal, Lemaire, and others, in the form of clysters, as a remedy for ascarides.—*Allg. Wein. Med. Zeit.*

Sulphocarbolate of Soda as a Prophylactic.—In the *Medical Times and Gazette*, 24th July, Dr Brackenridge speaks highly of the value of sulphocarbolate of soda in the treatment of scarlet fever. He agrees with Dr Sansom, that it acts internally in infectious diseases by disinfecting the disease germs within the body. Acting on this theory, he advises the administration of this salt to those who are exposed to the poison of scarlet fever, diphtheria, and measles. He relates several striking cases illustrative of the value of his suggestion. He gives the salt in doses of from five to thirty grains, three or four times daily, and when it is well borne he gives it even more frequently.

Coto Bark.—This is a name given to a bark forwarded from Bolivia, South America, and submitted to Dr G. C. Wittstein for examination. The botanical origin of the plant has not yet been determined. Dr Wittstein considers that an alcoholic tincture, in the proportion of one part of the bark to nine of the spirit, is the most suitable preparation. Professor Giete, of Munich, concludes from his experiments with this drug, that in it we possess a specific against diarrhœa in its most diverse forms. He administers it in doses of 0·5 gramme of the fine powder four or six times a day. Of the tincture, he usually gives ten minims every two hours. In Bolivia, whence the plant was sent, it is regarded as a remedy against rheumatism and gout.—*Archiv. der Pharmacie*, vol. iv. p. 214.

Cyanides in the Treatment of Acute Articular Rheumatism.—In an article in the *Bulletin Général de Therapeutique*, 15th Jan., Dr Luton of Rheims advocates the employment of cyanides in the treatment of acute rheumatism. He gives the history of ten cases, in all of which this treatment was strikingly successful; in one case

the temperature was distinctly reduced by the cyanide. The salts he chiefly used were the cyanide of zinc, and the cyanide of potassium. The first is odourless and tasteless, and may be given suspended in mucilage or in pills, in doses of $1\frac{1}{2}$ grains daily. The cyanide of potassium exercises a more direct action, but has a disagreeable taste; the maximum dose given of the latter salt was $1\frac{1}{2}$–$2\frac{1}{2}$ grains. In large doses the cyanides produce frontal headache, nausea, colic, and sometimes slight diarrhœa. In the medicinal doses they relieve pain and diminish the redness and swelling of the affected parts. They depress the action of the heart and pulse, and the urine becomes turbid, when an improvement in the symptoms sets in. The rapidity with which they act is a great recommendation in favour of these salts.

Jatropa Curcas.—The *American Journal of Medical Science,* Jan., quotes an article from the *Indian Medical Gazette,* in which the milky juice of the jatropa curcas is extolled as a hæmostatic. It does not cause pain nor does it act as a caustic, but simply curdles up the blood and covers the bleeding surface with a tenacious layer. It has no injurious effects on open wounds.

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